

in the only country in our hemisphere which does not yet enjoy it. I believe the Cuban people want democracy and that they will relish it and prosper in every realm—political, economic, and cultural—once they are free.

Before I sign off, let me congratulate the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, home to Radio and TV Marti, as it begins broadcasting from its new headquarters in Miami today. Here, closer to their listeners, Radio and TV Marti will continue to bring information, hope, and encouragement to the people of Cuba.

My best wishes to all of you, and thank you for listening.

NOTE: The President's remarks were taped at approximately 11:30 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House for later broadcast and were embargoed by the Office of the Press Secretary until 1:30 p.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Statement on the Washington Conference on Humanitarian Demining**

*May 20, 1998*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Washington Conference on Global Humanitarian Demining.

This Conference fulfills a commitment I made last October when Secretary Albright and Secretary Cohen announced the "Demining 2010 Initiative." We set as our goal the elimination, by the end of the next decade, of the threat posed by landmines to civilians. Landmine contamination is not only a pressing humanitarian problem, but it affects virtually every aspect of life in countries recovering from civil war or armed conflict.

We long ago realized that reaching this goal would require a concerted effort by the international community, and we have been heartened by the response—your response—so far. Each of the countries and organizations represented at this conference plays a critical role in this effort, and your presence here is testimony to the importance the international community attaches to this enormous task.

Almost 4 years ago I called for the global elimination of landmines. Since then, the U.S. has been at the forefront of the efforts

to rid the world of these hidden killers. Not only have we destroyed millions of landmines in our own arsenal and banned their export, but we have also provided a substantial share of the global resources for humanitarian demining.

The Washington conference is an opportunity for us to set a course for the future together and move toward a goal we all share: to eliminate as quickly as possible the scourge of antipersonnel landmines that kill and maim civilians. This conference builds on the efforts of many other countries and individuals, including, of course, the remarkable accomplishment of the Ottawa process, making this a truly global endeavor.

We have come a long way, but much remains to be done. It is my hope that the Washington conference will inspire a new commitment on the part of all present to ensure an increase in the level and effectiveness of effort and resources the world dedicates to the challenge of humanitarian demining.

### **Statement on the Resignation of President Soeharto of Indonesia**

*May 20, 1998*

We welcome President Soeharto's decision, which provides an opportunity to begin a process leading to a real democratic transition in Indonesia—an opportunity for the Indonesian people to come together and build a stable democracy for the future. We urge Indonesia's leaders to move forward promptly with a peaceful process that enjoys broad public support. The United States stands ready to support Indonesia as it engages in democratic reform.

### **Statement on the Conclusion of the World Trade Organization Meeting**

*May 20, 1998*

I am pleased and proud that the members of the World Trade Organization ("WTO") have accepted my invitation to hold the 1999 WTO Ministerial meeting in the United States. This meeting will enable us to advance the ambitious agenda I laid out earlier this week to shape the world trading system to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Next year's meeting will bring home for Americans the important stake that we all have in the global economy. And I welcome the decision by the WTO to ask United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky to chair that meeting.

In Geneva, we made important advances on our proposal to free the potential of electronic commerce. I am particularly pleased that the WTO members joined the United States in a standstill on any tariffs on electronic transmissions sent across national borders. We cannot allow discriminatory barriers to stunt the development of the most promising new economic opportunity in decades. This worldwide proposal builds on far-reaching agreements we reached within the last week with the European Union and Japan.

As we build a trading system for the 21st century that honors our values and expands opportunity, we must do more to ensure that spirited economic competition among nations never becomes a race to the bottom—in environmental protections, consumer protections, or labor standards. Without such a strategy, we cannot build the necessary public support for continued expansion of trade. I will work to ensure that the WTO and other international institutions are more responsive to labor, the environment, consumers, and other interests so that we can build the public confidence we need in our trade expansion initiatives.

I want to thank Ambassador Barshefsky, Secretary Glickman, Ambassador Rita Hayes, our Ambassador to the WTO, and all the representatives of the U.S. business community and other participants in the Ministerial who worked to make this meeting a success.

**Message to the Senate Returning  
Without Approval the "District of  
Columbia Student Opportunity  
Scholarship Act of 1998"**

*May 20, 1998*

*To the Senate of the United States:*

I am returning herewith without my approval S. 1502, the "District of Columbia Student Opportunity Scholarship Act of 1998."

If we are to prepare our children for the 21st Century by providing them with the best education in the world, we must strengthen our public schools, not abandon them. My agenda for accomplishing this includes raising academic standards; strengthening accountability; providing more public school choice, including public charter schools; and providing additional help to students who need it through tutors, mentors, and after-school programs. My education agenda also calls for reducing class size, modernizing our schools and linking them to the Internet, making our schools safe by removing guns and drugs, and instilling greater discipline.

This bill would create a program of federally funded vouchers that would divert critical Federal resources to private schools instead of investing in fundamental improvements in public schools. The voucher program established by S. 1502 would pay for a few selected students to attend private schools, with little or no public accountability for how those funds are used, and would draw resources and attention away from the essential work of reforming the public schools that serve the overwhelming majority of the District's students. In short, S. 1502 would do nothing to improve public education in the District of Columbia. The bill won't hire one new teacher, purchase one more computer, or open one after-school program.

Although I appreciate the interest of the Congress in the educational needs of the children in our Nation's Capital, this bill is fundamentally misguided and a disservice to those children.

The way to improve education for all our children is to increase standards, accountability, and choice within the public schools. I urge the Congress to send me legislation I have proposed to reduce class size, modernize our schools, end social promotions, raise academic standards for all students, and hold school systems, schools, and staff accountable for results.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
May 20, 1998.